

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2600

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 0323

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ET

SUBJ: REMARKS OF MINISTER OF INFORMATION ON

ERITREA AND OTHER SUBJECTS

1. MINISTER OF INFORMATION LIJ MICHAEL IMRU, WHO HAS
BEEN IN CHARGE OF RECENT EPMG DELEGATIONS TO KHARTOUM
AND ASMARA TO DISCUSS ERITREAN PROBLEM, TOLD ME YESTERDAY
THAT THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTS THE PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS
WITH THE ELF TO EXTEND AS A "CONTINUING DIALOGUE" FOR
QUITE SOME TIME. HE INDICATED THAT THE FOCUS OF THE
NEGOTIATIONS IS NOW BETWEEN INSURGENT LEADERS IN ERITREA
AND 30 TO 40 "ELDERS" WHOM HIS RECENT DELEGATION TO
ASMARA ASKED TO CONTACT THE INSURGENTS. MICHAEL IMRU
SAID TALKS WOULD ALSO BE ARRANGED OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY
WITH "ERITREAN EXILES" (CF ADDIS 297 AND PREVIOUS).
HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN INTO SPECIFICS REGARDING THE TYPE
OF SETTLEMENT WHICH MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE PMAC,
BUT HE DID SAY VERY CLEARLY THAT IT WOULD NOT GO FARTHER
THAN A "LOCAL GOVERNMENT" FORMULA FOR ERITREA WHICH COULD
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SOMEWHAT LATER BE INTRODUCED FOR OTHER ETHIOPIAN PROVINCES.

HE ALSO SAID THE PMAC HOPES THAT THE MORE TOLERANT ATTITUDE WHICH THE EPMG IS PRESENTLY SHOWING TOWARDS ETHIOPIAN MOSLEMS WILL HELP TO PROMOTE A MORE FAVORABLE ATTITUDE OF ERITREANS TOWARDS THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

2. COMMENT. MICHAEL IMRU'S REMARKS CONFIRM OUR BELIEF THAT THE PMAC IN ITS APPROACH TO THE ERITREAN PROBLEM IS EXTREMELY WORRIED LEST CONCESSIONS IN ERITREA LEAD TO THE FALLING APART OF ALL OF ETHIOPIA. THEY ALSO SUGGEST THAT THE PMAC DOES NOT ANTICIPATE MAKING A FINAL DECISION ON THE ERITREAN ISSUE FOR SOME TIME YET. END COMMENT.

3. IN HIS USUAL ACADEMIC FASHION MICHAEL IMRU DISCUSSED THE DIFFICULTIES OF EFFECTING REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN ETHIOPIA WHILST PRESERVING VALUABLE ELEMENTS OF THE ETHIOPIAN TRADITION INHERITED FROM THE PAST. HE EMPHASIZED THAT IT WAS NOT EASY IN SUCH REVOLUTIONARY CIRCUMSTANCES TO INSURE THAT THE GAINS OUTWEIGH THE LOSSES. HE HOPED THAT THE UNITED STATES UNDERSTOOD THE GREAT DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TODAY AND WOULD BE SYMPATHETIC TOWARDS THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S PROBLEMS. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT ETHIOPIAN SOCIALISM IS AN INDIGENOUS PRODUCT AND NOT AN IMPORT FROM ABROAD.

4. IN THE COURSE OF MY CALL I EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE NUMBER OF RECENT PRESS ARTICLES WHICH IN VEILED LANGUAGE OF ONE TYPE OR ANOTHER HAVE APPEARED TO ATTACK THE US. MICHAEL IMRU SAID THIS IS NOT THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION BUT THAT THE MEDIA DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS AS YET. HE SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

WYMAN

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